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Verbum Domini Manet

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA
GENERAL SYNOD, ARCHIVES

NOTES OF

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT WYCLIFFE COLLEGE

AT THE

STUDENTS' MISSIONARY MEETING

BY THE HONORABLE S. H. BLAKE.

I have listened with infinite pleasure to the excellent reports which have been made in respect of the foreign work and the home work. It is a matter of sincere congratulation that while St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, carried the Gospel message to the eastern shores of the Atlantic, we, after a lapse of over eighteen hundred years, should be doing so much in the way of repaying the immense debt that we owe him by sending back to the eastern lands the message that we have received from him. The true light of Asia is being thus spread abroad amidst the darkness of these, it may be much learned, but heathen, lands. I gladly take the motto of your association as a text. I feel that, at the present, no subject matter could be more appropriately dealt with than the watchword which you have taken for your association: *Verbum Domini manet* (the word of the Lord continueth or abideth.) I like "the Word of the Lord," not "the word of man." It is, and it alone is infallible. Amidst all the changes and chances of this mortal life it abideth forever. It is the impregnable rock of God's Word. *Verbum Domini manet.* Thank God for this. *In hoc signo vinces.* This is the means whereby your work is to be carried on. It is therefore of most vital moment that you should have the most perfect confidence in it. That you should speak of it with great reverence. Holy Scripture. God's inspired Word. The Book. The sacred oracles. "Blessed Lord,

who has caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning." Not a mere portion of it, but all. All Holy Scripture. Embrace this truth. Hold it fast. Do not let it go. Never let yourself be led astray from this great fundamental truth. It is virtually the touchstone of a standing or falling minister. When doubts as to the Word of God, with which he has entrusted you as the sword of the Spirit with which His work is to be accomplished, are allowed to enter and work in the heart, then usefulness lessens, and, if not driven out, the ministration will be barren of good results. You grieve the Holy Spirit. You disparage the instrument through which He works. His influence is removed. Your faith weakens, and you are a dry stick in the midst of your people. It is much to be deplored if Satan casts these doubts in your heart. At the first attack examine your own heart to find out. Is it carelessness? Is it pride? Is it love of novelty or sensation? Is it a desire to make some statement that will be talked about, so that for an hour you will be the centre of attraction? Examine all this well, and rest not until the Spirit of Truth leads you back into the truth. Much as it is to be deplored if unhappily you are led to doubt that the Scriptures are the Word of God, it becomes criminal when you, in the garb of a minister, having sworn solemnly allegiance to God and His Word, spread abroad amongst your hearers your own doubts. One of the favorite methods of Satan in his attack upon the Word is under pretence of much reverence to seek to introduce that which is fatal to a full belief in the Bible, namely, that portions of the Word are fallible and parts only infallible. Have you ever thought out how specious is this form of attack and yet how destructive? Who is to judge where the infallible begins and where it ends? Is it your reason that is to inform you on this subject? Then you make reason your God. To each one is left open the determination of what portions of Holy Writ so plainly teach spiritual truths as that they are to be accepted as infallible, and what portions may be or must be rejected. By what right is it that you claim the liberty thus to deal with the Word of God? And if you choose to

enter upon this destructive and uncertain path yourself, by what right are you at liberty to torture the flock which you were to kindly lead into the truth, and to build up and edify by leading the tender conscience into such an investigation?

God has written His Book so that he that runneth may read. He has most unmistakenly recognized the rights of the unlearned. He made the unlearned Peter and his companions the recipi nts of His message, the Word of Life, to hold and to distribute. For this I bless God, and thankfully, as one of the unlearned, claim my right to take His Word as He gave it as the Word of Truth, of Life and Light; without any inter mixture of error, and without any permission to add to it or to reject any portion of it.

Why should so much be quite unnecessarily given away in connection with the Bible? In our profession we would call this mode of dealing the giving away of our case. It is a matter in which constantly those unskilled have to be checked. In presenting the side on which they would claim success it is necessary to prevent the making of admissions which when carried to the legitimate conclusion virtually abandon that on which they apparently would desire to succeed. As an instance of this mode of dealing with the Bible take two or three illustrations:

It is said that no person believes that the Holy Spirit dictated to Paul in 2 Tim. iv. 13, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus when thou comest bring with thee." I may here say that I object *in toto* to the use of the word "dictation" or "dictate" in this connection. The Holy Spirit does not dictate. He inspires. He prepares the heart to receive and then fills with His message. His sweet, soft influence is not dictation. I have never doubted the inspiration of this part of the Word and do not doubt it to day. The Father of Love looked down upon His beloved servant in jail suffering for his testimony. He saw his needs; the poor shattered frame; his forgetfulness of self; and breathed this kind, loving thought, showing forth His care. Is He not the Comforter? How gladly we contemplate Him; not only enlightening the soul, but, leading in the little everyday matters of life. A

marvellous combination of Almighty power brooding at the creation over the vast abyss, and giving light; and lovingly caring for the aged saint in the last few months of his earthly career.

The same God in the Old Testament sees a dying lad in the wilderness of Beersheba. The omniscient eye of our heavenly Father sees the anguish of the mother and child, and sends his swift messenger to trace down from the tent of Abraham where are the mother and lad, and to give the child a drink of water, and open a well for him and the parent; and then cause to be written this little incident to show that while guiding the great concerns of the world, He stoops down to listen to the wail of a child.

A thousand years afterwards, for our God never changes, He saw His servant Elijah after the terrible day on Carmel, over-wrought, one man as he thought against king, queen, court, and nation, nerves all gone; depressed beyond control; lying under a juniper tree; and, again, his messenger is sent down to touch with his loving hand, and to place the cruise of water and the baked cake by his side, and he is awakened to eat, and the hand gently laid upon him and sleep again given to him, and then again to eat and drink; and for our comfort the Holy Spirit again writes this.

It is said that John ii. 18, "Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off," could not have been inspired. Why would the Holy Spirit have given the distance at all, or why have said about fifteen furlongs? I never doubted that God in His goodness gave us this distance, and gave it in the way in which people ordinarily speak. If this had been given to a foot, it would have thrown discredit upon the story. The ordinary method of parlance, as, the distance to the Humber, or to the Don, or to the north, is given. This was written for readers not acquainted with Palestine. To show that this great miracle was not done in a corner. That it was under the very walls of Jerusalem, and, therefore, if not a fact capable so easily of contradiction.

And, then, again, John ii: 6, "And there were set there

six water pots of stone after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece." It is actually brought as a ground for non-inspiration that the expression is "two or three firkins." How to the honest reader or hearer can it be said that any such conclusion can be drawn from this mode of expression? Possibly, the firkins not all of the same size. It was well to show how large a quantity was affected by the Lord; and the language is again that in which is couched by a looker-on the account of such a transaction. The Holy Spirit condescends to speak as men speak, giving as accurately as need be all the details which He considers necessary to make complete the story. It is well to look at the remarks of a host of godly, spirit-filled men, as much loved Matthew Henry, the reverent and revered Bishop Ryle, accurate and reverent Brown and Fausett, who give such passages as the above as illustrations of the fact that "the Holy Spirit condescends to use man's common form of language, and that such expressions are not inconsistent with inspiration." This wonderful blending is well illustrated in the 6th chapter of the Acts. A simple business matter. The dividing up of the shekels amongst the poor. The ascertaining who are really needy. The finding out the number of children depending upon them. But, the Holy Spirit in reference to such a matter says:—"Look ye out seven men full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom whom we may appoint over this business."

I beg of you never to let Satan lead you to the dishonouring of God's word by treating any part of it as fallible. Never let the mind rest on supposed discrepancies. You may not be able to reconcile completely all that the Holy Spirit has given to you. Now you see through a glass darkly. In due time all this will be explained. This is the day in which you are to walk by faith and not by sight. Never speak of the dictation of the Holy Spirit. It must grieve Him, one who acts tenderly and lovingly and seeks to draw by the cords of love. Remember, fellow-students, your immense responsibility, not only for your own souls, but for the souls of others. Ever pray